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ABSTRACT

Although the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), in Arizona, maintains an exemplary relationship and numerous transfer agreements with the state's public universities, systematic and operational problems still exist. Systematic problems include the accumulation of excessive college credit hours; changes in applicable transfer course equivalents and departmental elective credit; "upper-division creep" or changes at universities of lower-division courses to upper-division courses; lack of state-wide lower and upper-division course criteria; and downgrading upper-division credit courses to lower-division courses. Operational problems include a tendency to ignore formal articulation processes to deal with changes in equivalency, the absence of a tracking system for "upper-division creep," a lack of monitoring and sanctioning systems, short-term validity of equivalent courses, different university policies regarding transfer hours and standard numbers or required upper-division credits, and faculty attitudes toward transfer. To address these problems, the MCCCD has proposed the following solutions: (1) the Arizona Transfer Partnership Degree (ATPD) or the MCCCD Transfer Partnership Degree (MTPD), state-wide plans to standardize transfer policies, lower and upper-division courses, and course validity; (2) requiring universities to provide upper-division credit to transfer students when "upper-division creep" occurs; (3) establishing sanction policies for universities who do not follow established formal processes; (4) requiring universities to accept 72 hours in transfer from community colleges and to standardize the number of required upper-division credits; and (5) providing training to faculty in the requirements of transfer partnerships and the resulting process and equivalencies should be monitored. Contains 15 references. Models of the ATPD and the MTPD are appended. (TGI)

ED 390 512

ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER:

DEFINITIONS, PROBLEMS, AND SOLUTIONS

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PREFACE

When I came to the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) as Chancellor in 1978, we had five colleges in the MCCCD with an enrollment of 48,758. Arizona State University's (ASU's) enrollment was 37,122. Today MCCCD has ten colleges enrolling 89,637 students (Fall, 1995), and ASU's total enrollment is 45,929 (Fall, 1995).

In 1978 our articulation efforts were in a formative stage. Over the years, under the direction of the Joint Conference Committee, the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges, and the Arizona Board of Regents, and through the leadership of Vice-Chancellor of Student and Educational Development Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr. and University Articulation Specialist Irene Wright, a number of state-wide efforts were initiated. These include: Articulation Task Forces, the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee, the General Education Articulation Task Force, and the Arizona Higher Education Course Equivalency Guide (CEG).

MCCCD continues to lead articulation efforts throughout Arizona. Alfredo and I enjoy enviable relationships with Lattie Coor and Milton Glick, President and Provost, respectively, of Arizona State University. We generally meet on a monthly basis, and each can access the others via a mere telephone call. Early in our articulation efforts with ASU, we agreed on the principle of "Cooperation, not Competition." This precept continues to direct our mutual efforts.

We are convinced that we have achieved the best state-wide system of articulation in existence and that Maricopa has the best community college to university transfer articulation system in the United States. Two examples of the excellence of this system are the thirty-four active, discipline-specific Articulation Task Forces throughout the state and the Course Equivalency Guide. This CEG lists thousands of courses from every community college and details their equivalencies at the state universities in Arizona.

However, we frequently uncover areas which need our attention and our intervention. But despite these problems, we continue to work for one common benefit: our students. When I consider that the enrollments of our two institutions rank MCCCD as the second largest community college system in the United States, and Arizona State as the fifth largest university, I am mindful of the responsibility.

In the accompanying paper on Articulation and Transfer in the MCCCD, Wright, et al., list articulation and transferproblems that are divided into two categories:

systemic and operational. The systemic problems are the more difficult to solve. The operational problems grew out of historical practice. They may be somewhat easier to change.

I believe this paper offers a framework for dealing with the primary issues. All of us hope that our fellow educators will benefit from our experiences. In the end we hope that this paper helps students.

Paul Elsner, Chancellor

Maricopa County Community College District

ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER:

DEFINITIONS, PROBLEMS, AND SOLUTIONS

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Maricopa County Community College District

ABSTRACT

The Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) enjoys an exemplary relationship with Arizona's public universities. At the same time, not all of Arizona's transfer challenges have been met. This paper explores articulation and transfer problems of both a asystemic and operational nature and suggests solutions to them.

Systemic problems facing MCCCD include the need for students to take excessive credit hours because credits which are accepted at a university may not apply to a major, decreasing equivalencies, upper division creep, and lack of criteria for determining whether a course should be taught at the upper or lower division. Operational problems include university faculty ignoring the established process, a lack of tracking, monitoring and sanctioning systems, short-term validity for the Course Equivalency Guide, faculty attitude, and differing policies among the universities.

Solutions include adopting transfer partnership degrees, establishing standardized policies and criteria, faculty training, and establishing policies to assess and sanction deviance from formal processes.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD) charges the colleges to create and continuously improve affordable, accessible, and effective learning environments for the lifelong educational needs of the diverse communities they serve. This mission is fulfilled in part through university transfer education and general education.

MCCCD has realized this mission successfully and presents a model that few can match (Puyear, July 1995). Evidence of the success is the cooperation with Arizona State University (ASU) and the yearly production of the Arizona-wide Course Equivalency Guide (CEG). The cross-representation at both institutions, the inclusion of each institution in the other's curriculum and general studies processes, and the joint development of ASU/MCCCD Transfer Guides all illustrate cooperation.

In addition, each year MCCCD and ASU each transfer thousands of students between institutions. In Fall 1995, 61 percent (11,941) of ASU Main and 92 percent (2,959) of ASU West upper division students had transferred MCCCD credit. Each year approximately 8,000 MCCCD students transfer back, reporting that ASU was the last college attended.

At the same time, the higher education transfer structure becomes more complex each year as universities add autonomous branches and private institutions proliferate. The expansion within community college and university systems also adds burgeoning curriculum changes each month.

Given these factors, even willing cooperation has not been able to solve all articulation/transfer problems, nor have all suggested solutions accommodated the diverse needs of MCCCD's transfer students. This paper includes definitions, identifies systemic and operational problems, and offers possible solutions for serious issues directly affecting MCCCD student transfer of credit and its application toward completion of baccalaureate degree requirements at Arizona's state postsecondary institutions.

DEFINITIONS

Articulation refers to the range of processes and relationships involved in the systemmatic movement of students between and among post-secondary institutions. The goal of articulation is to promote problem-free transfer of courses from one institution to another. It is critical that transfer credit be both accepted by the receiving institution and applied to the student's major in a manner that is not punitive or penalizing in accommodating the diverse needs of transfer students..

Several of the problems identified are a result of differences in the meaning of the term **equivalent**. Not all equivalencies are equal. Note, for example, the difference between **applicability** and **acceptability**. Note, too, the way in which different levels of equivalency affect students and that a "direct course equivalent" can still require a student to complete additional credits to satisfy the baccalaureate degree requirements.

Applicability and **acceptability** are not interchangeable terms. A community college course that is **accepted** in any of the five forms listed under **acceptability** below may or may not **apply** to the university, college, or major requirements.

For purposes of discussion, the following brief definitions are provided. (A Glossary of formal definitions is appended.)

TRANSFER COURSE APPLICABILITY

Course applicability means that a course which has been **accepted** by the university is **applied to** and **counts toward** the university degree requirements by satisfying major and/or general studies requirements. The way in which an **accepted** course is **applied** is determined by the department or college in which the student pursues a baccalaureate degree.

TRANSFER COURSE ACCEPTABILITY

There are five ways in which an equivalent course may be **accepted** by the university:

1. Direct Course Equivalent

A community college course is accepted as equivalent to a university course and, theoretically, students need not repeat the course at the university.

2. Upper-Division Equivalent

A community college course is accepted as equivalent to a university upper-division course but with lower-division credit. Theoretically, students need not repeat the course at the university. However, it does not count toward the required number of upper-division credit hours.

3. General/Liberal Studies Value

A community college course is **accepted** as an ASU university-wide general studies credit or a Northern Arizona University (NAU) university-wide liberal studies credit. However, it may or may not **apply** to the major. The University of Arizona does not have a general/liberal studies program.

4. Departmental Elective Credit (DEC)

A community college course is **accepted** as an elective by the department. However, it may or may not **apply** to all majors.

5. General Elective Credit (E)

A community college course is **accepted** as an elective **by the university**. However, it may not be **applied** to the major or by all colleges at the university.

MCCCD ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER PROBLEMS

Maricopa has identified several serious articulation and transfer problems which can be categorized as systemic and operational.

SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS

1. Excessive College Credit Hours

Because community college courses may be accepted by the university but not applied to the major, many times universities or university departments require community college students to take additional lower division or upper division courses to fulfill university requirements, college requirements, and/or major requirements. This is a direct result of the acceptability/applicability issue.

Although Arizona public baccalaureate degree-granting institutions have designated the acceptability of a community college course in satisfying General Studies/Liberal Studies courses, many times university departments and colleges require completion of specific General Studies/Liberal Studies courses. This often requires community college transfer students to take additional lower-division courses to fulfill program requirements and prerequisites within their college and major/minor area of study as well as upper-division general education/liberal studies requirements at the universities. This leads to the accumulation of excessive college credit hours above that which is ordinarily needed to meet baccalaureate degree requirements.

All of these institutional barriers lead to extended years in school, added taxpayer expense, and lack of degree completion.

Furthermore, this demonstrates an overall lack of understanding for the needs of under-represented/at risk students as evidenced by the Arizona Board of Regents proposal to penalize students who accumulate more than 160 credit hours.

Among MCCCD prefixes which have a history of transferability, less than 15 percent have direct course equivalency (six-year average percent). The most frequently received ASU equivalency is general elective credit and on average, more than 44 percent of Maricopa courses receive general elective credit. At the same time, some prefixes receive primarily general elective (E) equivalency with General Business (GBS) showing 89 percent; Philosophy (PHI), 73.5 percent; and Economics (ECN), 71.4 percent. (Inman, August 1995)

The six-year averages indicate that there is little consistency in equivalency across the disciplines. Direct equivalency, for example, ranges in average from 8.5 percent in GBS to 66 percent in Mathematics (MAT). Although E is the most frequently received

equivalency, it, too, ranges from an average of eight percent in English Humanities (ENH) to 89 percent in GBS across six years. (Inman, August 1995)

2. Decreasing Direct Course Equivalents and Departmental Elective Credit

There has been a steady loss of direct course equivalent transfer along with a decline in departmental elective (DEC) credit. One has only to listen to students' horror stories to understand the stress and grief they experience when they learn that the transfer status of courses to the university and major of choice has been changed. These changes lead to additional semesters and funds to meet the new requirements.

Consider the following examples (Inman, August 1995):

a. In 1993 direct equivalency with ASU in Engineering Science (ECE) was 63.63 percent, but by 1995 it had been reduced to 14.28 percent.

b. Humanities (HUM) 103 is among the top 35 full-time student equivalent(FTSE)-generating MCCCD courses. Through 1994-95 HUM103 and HUM104 were accepted by ASU as direct course equivalents—HUM 301 and HUM302--with lower-division credit, and satisfied three ASU general studies values: Literacy and Critical Inquiry [L1], Humanities [HU], and Historical Awareness [H].

   Effective 1995-96 the equivalencies were changed from HUM301 and HUM302 to general elective (E) credit and the general studies values were retained only for 1995-96.

c. In General Business (GBS), nearly 90 percent of the MCCCD courses carry general elective credit with direct equivalency averaging nine percent. Given the popularity of the business major at ASU and the fact that 90 percent of GBS courses may not transfer for business majors, transfer credit hour **applicability** is problematic for business transfer students.

3. Upper-Division Creep

"Upper-division creep" occurs when a university course which has been designated as lower-division (numbered 100 or 200 in one or more years) is changed to 300 level or above.

This factor contributes to excessive accumulation of hours by community college transfer students because they still need to meet university upper division requirements. A few examples follow:

MCCCD	UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY
CHM220	CHM225 ASU 94-95	CHM325 ASU 95-96
CHM220LL	CHM226 ASU 94-95	CHM326 ASU 95-96
BLT131	IS241 NAU 93-94	DEC(CM) NAU 95-96
NOTE: IS241 changed to CM241 and CM241 changed to CM341.		
MUP209	MUP231 NAU 93-94	MUP431 NAU 94-95
PHI105	PHI111 ASU 92-93	DEC (PHI) ASU 94-95
NOTE: Per the 92-93 Philosophy Articulation Task Force (ATF), ASU discontinued offering the content in PHI111 and began to offer it in PHI306.		
PSY235	PSYC216 UA 94-95	PSYC357 UA 95-96

Another example of upper-division creep occurs when courses are introduced as upper division (numbered 300 or 400) when they are traditionally taught as lower division (numbered 100 or 200).

4. Lack of Lower/Upper Division Course Criteria

There are no state-wide guidelines/criteria to determine which courses should be taught at the lower division or the upper division. For example, the 1995-96 CEG includes the following:

MCCCD	ASU
COM225	COM225/* [L1]

*ASU WEST - COM225 satisfies [L1] in transfer; acceptable in lieu of the COM325 requirement for the Communication Studies major. ASU West's COM325 does not satisfy [L1] requirements.

In addition, courses with "Introduction" in their titles should not as a rule be offered at the upper division. Currently MCCCD's DAH 100, Introduction to Dance, is accepted as equivalent to ASU-Main's DAH100, yet at ASU-West the identical course description is used for DAH301, Introduction to Dance.

5. Loss of Upper-Division Equivalency

The loss of upper division equivalent credit occurs when a community college course that is directly equivalent to a university upper-division course for one or more years, is

downgraded to departmental elective credit (DEC) or general elective credit (E), or deleted altogether. A few examples follow:

MCCCD	UNIVERSITY	UNIVERSITY
HUM103	HUM301 ASU 94-95	E ASU 95-96
HUM104	HUM302 ASU 94-95	E ASU 95-96
SWU281	SWU331 ASU 93-94	DEC(SWU) ASU 94-95
HIS273	HIST332 UA 93-94	DEC(HIS) UA 94-95
HIS275	HIST425 UA 93-94	DEC(HIS) UA 94-95
POS201	POL434 UA 94-95	DEC(POL) UA 95-96

OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS

1. Ignoring the Formal Processes

There are formal, workable articulation processes established to deal with changes in equivalency. However, universities ignore the process and make arbitrary, unilateral decisions. This is exemplified in HUM103 described above.

2. No Tracking System for Upper-Division Creep

The universities do not track upper-division creep and, because they ignore the formal processes, the community colleges have no recourse to appeal upper-division creep.

For example, in 1994, MCCCD had 242 courses with 300-400 level equivalencies at at least one of the three state universities (Schwalm, April 1994); this number had decreased to 223 by 1995-96 (1995-96 CEG). Because there is no established tracking system, we do not know how many courses began at the 100-200 level and were changed to the 300-400 level.

3. No Monitoring/Sanctioning System

The Arizona Board of Regents does not have a system for managing or monitoring either arbitrary, unilateral decision-making outside the formal process, or for assessing upper division creep problems. In addition, even if such a monitoring system existed, there are no sanctions imposed on offenders.

4. Course Equivalency Validity

The CEG course evaluation is valid only for the academic year in which a student completes the course. This limitation on course equivalency validity is extremely detrimental to the "non-traditional" student, i.e. someone who requires more than four years to complete a baccalaureate degree, and in community colleges the "non-traditional" student is the norm.

In addition, the following conflicting policies exacerbate student frustrations.

"Students admitted or readmitted to a public Arizona community college or university during a summer term must follow the requirements of the catalog in effect the following fall semester or of any single catalog in effect during subsequent terms of continuous enrollment." (Catalog Under Which a Student Graduates Policy, 1995)

The 1995-96 CEG states: "The course evaluation as listed in the CEG is valid for the academic year in which a student completes the course (summer session is included with the previous academic year). A course evaluation may be subject to change in subsequent issues of the CEG due to changes in university or community college curriculum." (2)

This conflict results in at least two problems:

a. One policy for beginning summer students rolls forward to Fall while the other reverts to the previous academic year.

b. Since CEG evaluations are valid only the year the course is taken, students have difficulty mapping out a baccalaureate degree—especially if they are non-traditional.

5. University Acceptance of Community College Credits

According to the 1995-96 CEG, each state university accepts varying numbers of community college transfer hours. To illustrate:

Arizona State University (Main, East and West)--64 hours;

Northern Arizona University—a maximum of 70 hours;

University of Arizona—a maximum of 72 hours. (2)

6. No Standard Number of Required Upper-Division Credits

Currently, the required upper-division credits are as follows:

Northern Arizona University	18
University of Arizona	42
Arizona State University	50

7. Faculty Attitude

Faculty attitude, as it relates to transfer, needs to be addressed by the universities. The attitude of faculty is at the heart of any transfer system. University faculty should understand and be sympathetic to the problems of transfer students and transfer must be looked at as an important educational policy issue. In addition, community college and university faculty understanding of ATFs, the CEG, transfer guides, and other transfer processes, must be increased (Pima, September 1995).

More urgently, transfer must be viewed as an essential element in community college/university relations. It cannot be viewed as a favor granted by the university if, and only if it chooses (Puyear, July 1995).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The state-wide Course Applicability System (CAS) is a prime example of a critically needed support system. The CAS includes on-line course equivalency guides, transfer guides, and student transcripts. The system will help simplify the effects of the increasingly complex and expanding higher education system and reduce many labor-intensive procedures. It has not yet been funded.

In addition, the Task Force on Community College Enrollment Growth Planning (1993) recommended that community college students be guaranteed university admission with upper-division status, reassurance that community college courses would apply to baccalaureate degrees, and equitable treatment for community college students when competing for admission to majors.

MCCCD agrees with these recommendations, which have been approved in principle by the Arizona Board of Regents, and believes that although they have not been implemented, they need to be. In addition, we propose the following solutions for the systemic and operational problems cited above:

1. EXCESSIVE COLLEGE CREDIT HOURS

In response to decreasing direct course equivalents and departmental elective credit and loss of upper-division equivalency, we recommend the following:

a. Arizona Transfer Partnership Degree (ATPD)

MCCCD supports transfer without loss of credit by providing standardization among all state baccalaureate degree-granting universities at the freshman and

sophomore coursework levels for each common degree as is recommended in the Gherald L. Hoopes, Jr. letter. (July 1995, 2) This can be accomplished through the development of an Arizona Transfer Partnership Degree (Appendix A).

This solution meets the needs of all Arizona's students who transfer among and between Arizona's public institutions—both community colleges and universities—provided they do not change their major. It also supports diversity in common degrees offered by all state baccalaureate degree-granting universities at the junior, senior, and post-graduate coursework levels. (Hoopes, July 1995, 2)

In addition, it speaks to state universities assuring that credits acquired by students completing an Arizona Community College transfer program will apply toward a baccalaureate degree, and work done at the community college will not have to be repeated at the university as noted in The Community College Growth Planning Task Force Group recommendation approved by the ABOR in 1994.

"OR"

b. MCCCD Transfer Partnership Degree (MTPD) and Multi-Track Associate of Arts Degree

MCCCD Transfer Partnership Degree (MTPD)

An alternative to the Arizona Transfer Partnership Degree can be accomplished through the development of an MCCCD Transfer Partnership Degree (Appendix B).

This solution meets the needs of only those students who have identified a major and who have selected the college/university to which they intend to transfer. All transfer credit will apply—provided students do not change their majors or universities.

The individualized degree will parallel the student's four-year degree as designated by the upper division institution. The degree program will vary in course selection and number of credit hours according to the lower division requirements of the major. This will assure that all earned credit assigned to courses numbered 100 and above will transfer and apply to the student's formal baccalaureate degree program.

AND"

Multi-Track Associate of Arts Degree

This solution meets the needs of only those students who have identified the state university to which they intend to transfer but who do not have an identified major. (While courses may be acceptable, they may or may not be applicable to the major of choice.)

The degree is intended to offer maximum flexibility and benefit to students by linking the AA degree requirements with the lower-division course requirements specific to the state university chosen by the student for transfer. This direct linkage will minimize but not preclude the loss of transferable credits generally incurred by students who do not declare a major.

There will be a separate transfer track developed for each of the state universities: ASU, NAU, and the U of A.

2. UPPER DIVISION CREEP

When "upper-division creep" occurs, we propose that the university be required to transfer the course as equivalent with upper-division credit being awarded. The course will apply toward the required number of upper-division credit hours and need not be repeated at the university. Also, the number of credit hours involved with the "upper-division creep" course will be deducted from the total number of credit hours accepted in transfer from the community college so that the total community college lower-division hours (72) are still available for transfer (see solution number 4 below).

3. NO TRACKING/MONITORING/SANCTIONING SYSTEM

Universities should not be permitted to make arbitrary, unilateral changes in curriculum and community college course equivalents, including general studies values. The state-wide Articulation Task Forces, General Education Articulation Task Force, the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee, the Course Equivalency Guide Steering Committee, and the Joint Conference Committee (Board of Regents and Arizona State Board of Directors for Community Colleges) offer a collaborative and cooperative means of tracking and monitoring these issues. Policies need to be established and sanctions identified for those who do not follow the agreed-upon formal processes.

4. LACK OF LOWER/UPPER-DIVISION COURSE CRITERIA

State-wide guidelines/criteria need to be established to determine which courses should be taught at the lower division and which courses should be taught at the upper division. Also, courses intended to be fundamentally "introductory" or to provide an overview should be restricted to the 100 level.

5. COURSE EQUIVALENCY VALIDITY

The CEG must become a continuing, stable reference document that retains its content validity from year to year. This can be accomplished by specifying that only those new courses, modified courses, or deleted courses, as well as general studies values that have been reviewed and recommended by the designated Articulation Task Force (ATF), followed by approved college/university curriculum processes/procedures, would be changed in the CEG.

Given that the Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC) has as one of its goals the establishment and monitoring of discipline-specific articulation task forces (Handbook For Articulation Task Forces, 1995-1996, 23), APASC should assume a much more proactive role in articulation and transferability of courses.

6. UNIVERSITY ACCEPTANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE CREDITS

Each state university should accept 72 hours in transfer from community colleges. Given the extreme diversity between and among the various state community college districts, the ever-increasing presence of the "swirling student," and the contemporary definition of the community college student (non-traditional), it appears to be very questionable for the universities not to accept a common number of transfer credits.

7. THE NUMBER OF REQUIRED UPPER-DIVISION CREDITS

Public universities should standardize the number of required upper-division credits.

8. FACULTY ATTITUDE

Community college and university faculty should be trained in the requirements of transfer partnerships, and the resulting process and equivalencies should be monitored.

Training would result in a new relationship in which both community college and university faculty recognize the expertise of community colleges in lower division education and the corresponding expertise of universities in upper division and graduate studies.

GLOSSARY

ARTICULATION: the process of developing on-going communication and agreements between and among Arizona public two-year and state baccalaureate degree-granting institutions. The articulation process is intended to ensure problem-free transfer from one institution to another. (1995-96 Articulation Task Force Handbook, 1)

TRANSFER COURSE APPLICABILITY: the manner in which the community college equivalent course is applied toward meeting university, college, and/or major baccalaureate degree requirements. This is determined by the department or college of the university in which the student is pursuing a degree.

TRANSFER COURSE ACCEPTABILITY (1995-96 Course Equivalency Guide, 3)

1. **Direct Course Equivalent:** community college course accepted as being substantially equivalent to the identified university course number and department.

2. **Upper-Division Equivalent:** community college course accepted as equivalent in content to university upper division course. Course will be accepted as equivalent but with lower-division credit. Course will not count toward the required number of upper-division credit hours and need not be repeated at the university.

3. **Departmental Elective Credit (DEC)**: community college course accepted as departmental elective credit (DEC) by the university in the department indicated. A limited number of community college courses are accepted for credit in the department indicated.

4. **General Elective Credit (E)**: community college course accepted for general elective credit by the university. A limited number of community college courses are accepted as fulfilling lower-division hours needed for graduation, but these courses may not be applicable to either departmental or general/liberal studies requirements. Courses designated as elective credit may not be applicable to all colleges of the university.

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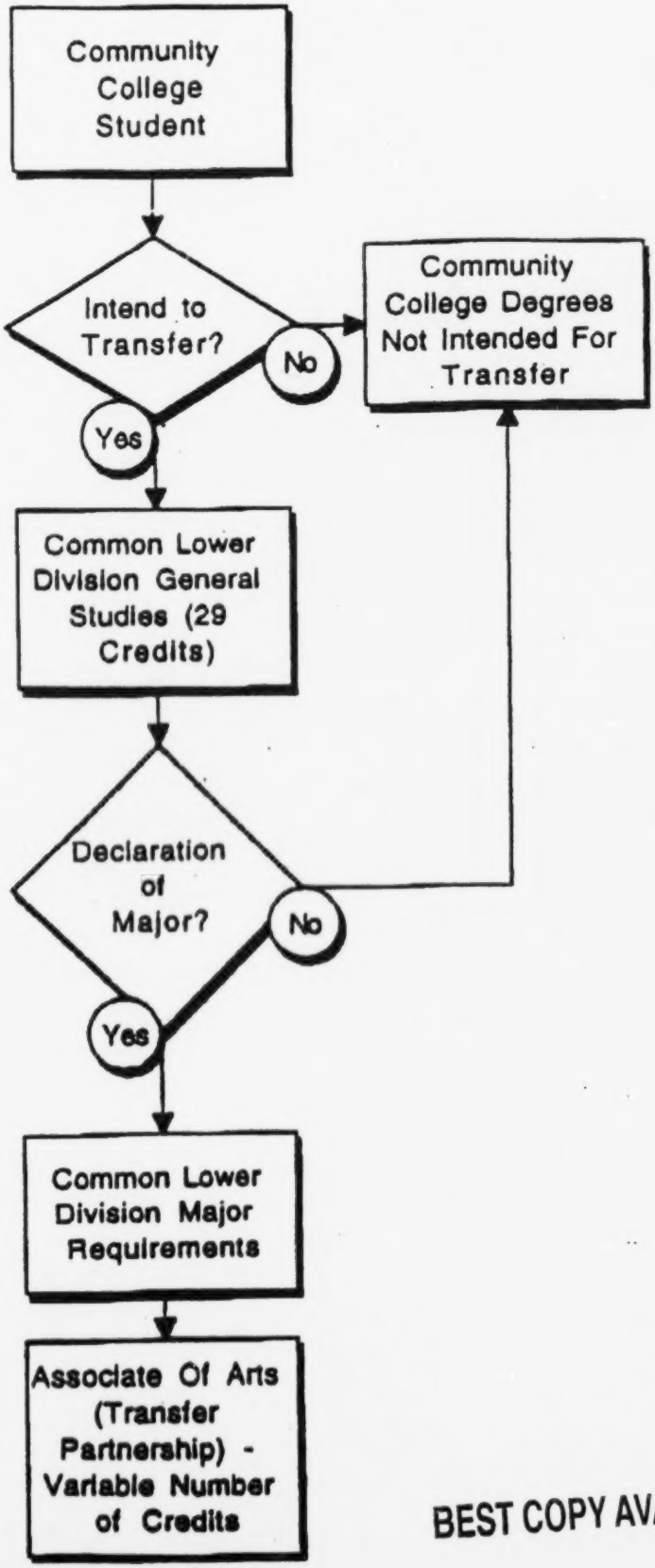
Appendix "A"
Arizona Transfer Partnership Degree (ATPD)



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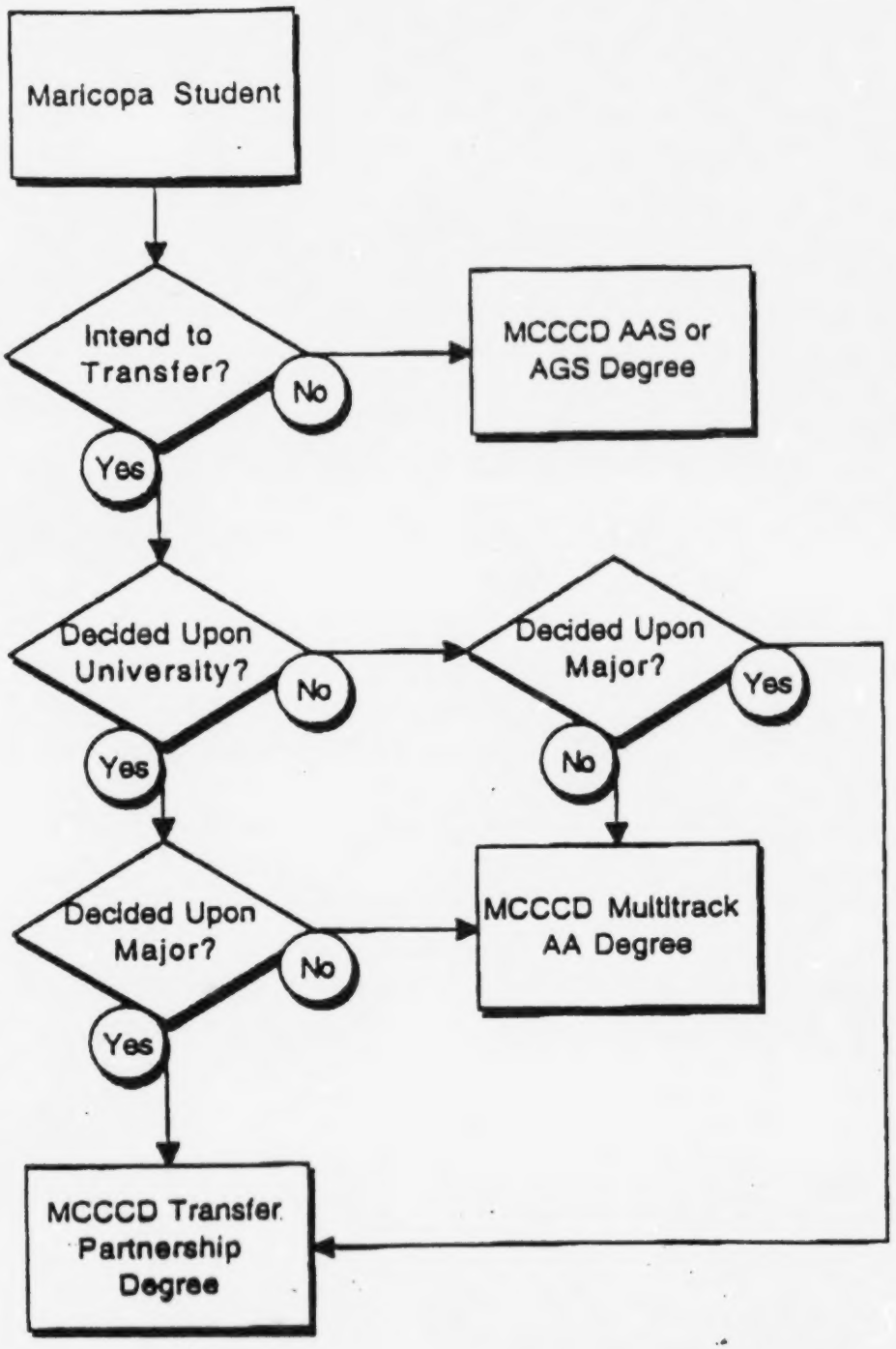
Appendix "B"
MCCCD Transfer Partnership Degree (MTPD)



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